

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0904

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PP

SUBJ: BOUGAINVILLE DECLARES INDEPENDENCE. STYLES ITSELF
"NORTH SOLOMONS"

1. LOCAL PRESS SEPTEMBER 2 REPORTED POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF BOUGAINVILLE WAS DECLARED SEPTEMBER 1 AND CELEBRATED THROUGHOUT BOUGAINVILLE WITHOUT INCIDENT OR DISRUPTION OF NORMAL COMMUNITY SERVICES. DISTRICT COMMISSIONER'S FIGURES FOR OVERALL ATTENDANCES AT VARIOUS CELEBRATIONS WERE PUT AT 12,000 OF BOUGAINVILLE'S POPULATION OF 90,000. ABOUT 10 PERCENT OF PUBLIC SERVANTS AT KIETA SUB DISTRICT (THE DISTRICT CAPITAL) DID NOT REPORT FOR WORK. A COMBINED CHURCH SERVICE LED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CATHOLIC, UNITED, SDA AND ANGLICAN CHURCHES WAS HELD, FOLLOWED BY THE RAISING OF THE FLAG OF THE NORTH SOLOMONS.

2. CHIEF MINISTER REPORTED TO HAVE STATED FROM VIEW-POINT OF CENTRAL GOVT ISLAND IS STILL CALLED BOUGAINVILLE. HE NOTED THAT BOUGAINVILLE WOULD NOT BE A SOVEREIGN
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COUNTRY AS OF SEPT 1 BECAUSE ITS UNILATERAL DECLARA-

TION OF INDEPENDENCE HAS NOT BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE UN, AUSTRALIA AND PNG. PNG PLANS TO CONTINUE ALL GOVT SERVICES TO BOUGAINVILLE DESPITE THE SECESSIONIST ANNOUNCEMENT.

3. PRESS ON SEPTEMBER 1 QUOTED BOUGAINVILLE DISTRICT PLANNER LEO HANNETT AS STATING FEW CHANGES CAN BE EXPECTED FOR NEXT SIX TO TWELVE MONTHS, AND THAT ALTHOUGH POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE WAS BEING DECLARED, THE FINAL GOAL WAS A LONG WAY OFF. HE WAS ADAMANT IN DENYING THAT THE BREAK COULD BE CHARACTERIZED AS SIMILAR TO THE HALF-HEARTED PAPUA BESENA DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE FROM PNG.

4. THE BOUGAINVILLE GOVT COULD BE EVICTED FROM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT SPACE AT ARAWA. ALLEGEDLY IT HAS BEEN OFFERED SPACE AT THS TUNURU CATHOLIC MISSION THREE MILES FROM ARAWA. DR. ALEXIS SAREI HAS DERIDED TO ACCEPT THEN CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE NEW INTERIM GOVT, THUS CLEARLY THROWING IN HIS LOT WITH THE SECESSIONISTS.

5. ON AUGUST 31 HANNETT GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE STATING THAT IT WOULD BE PROPER FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO APPROACH BOUGAINVILLE COPPER LTD. (BCL) AFTER SEPTEMBER 1, AND WAS CERTAIN THAT THE MINE WOULD LISTEN TO THE NEW REGIME'S PROPOSALS. IF NOT, HE CONCLUDED THE MINE COULD BE CLOSED AS A LAST RESORT TO "OBTAIN ALLEGIANCE FROM BCL AND TEACH IT THAT IT CANNOT CONTINUE TO SIT ON THE SIDELINE AND EXPLOIT THE GENEROSITY OF THE BOUGAINVILLIAN PEOPLE." AS A SWEETENER HE SAID BOUGAINVILLE COPPER WOULD BE OFFERED A "BETTER DEAL" IF IT RENEGOTIATES ITS CONTRACT WITH THE SECESSIONIST GOVT. DR. ALEXIS SAREI STRESSED THAT CLOSING THE MINE WAS A LAST RESORT AND THAT HE PERSONALLY FELT THAT THE COMPANY WOULD CONSIDER ANY PROPOSAL FOR ITS OWN GOOD. HE CONCLUDED "THE MINE IS VULNERABLE IN MANY WAYS AND IS NOT DESTRUCTION PROOF".

6. FATHER MOMIS RESIGNED FROM HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, ACCORDING TO SEPTEMBER 3 PRESS WHICH ALSO REPORTED THAT CATHOLIC CHURCH ON BOUGAINVILLE HAD ANNOUNCED ITS SUPPORT FOR BOUGAINVILLE'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.
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COMMENT: THE BOUGAINVILLE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IS MORE SERIOUS THAN THAT OF PAPUA BESENA. BOUGAINVILLE SECESSIONIST TENDENCIES ARE MORE CRYSTALIZED, BETTER DEFINED, BETTER ORGANIZED AND BETTER LED. BOUGAINVILLE LEADERS ARE DEALING WITH A SMALLER AREA, A MORE HOMOGENEOUS SMALLER POPULATION, AND HAVE THE MACHINERY (THE BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY) TO CO-ORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF THE

VILLAGE COUNCIL LEADERSHIP OF THE ISLAND. THE COPPER MINE PROVIDES AN EXCELLENT TARGET FOR VERBAL HARRASSMSNT, THE UNION LEADERSHIP IS SECESSIONIST, AND THE POPULATION SURROUNDING IT HAS BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THAT BOUGAINVILLE RICHES ARE FLOWING TO MORESBY WHILE THE PROBLEMS CREATED BY THE MINE ARE BORNE LOCALLY.

HANNETT TALKS OF DEVELOPING A PARALLEL BUREAUCRACY IN BOUGAINVILLE, WITH PRIORITY GIVEN TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FINANCE CUSTOMS AND POLICE DEPARTMENTS, AND POSSIBLY A BROADCASTING STATION. HE IS SILENT AS TO FINANCING AND ADMITS THESE WILL BE LONG IN COMING.

CENTRAL GOVT'S REACTION COULD EVENTUALLY BE FORCE. LEADING POLICE OFFICIALS HERE INDICATE THE BOUGAINVILLE POLICE ARE STILL UNDER CENTRAL CONTROL, BUT THE POLICE LEADERSHIP IS HOPING THAT FORCE WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO DEAL WITH BOUGAINVILLE, CONSIDER THEIR OFFICERS TO BE UN- PREPARED TO USE FORCE THERE AND EXPECT DEATHS ON BOTH SIDES WOULD RESULT. THEY EXPECT THAT PAYBACK KILLINGS WOULD MULTIPLY AND THEY EVEN TALK OF BOUGAINVILLE EXPORTING TERRORISM TO MAINLAND PNG TOWNS. THEY CLEARLY DO NOT WANT A CONFRONTATION.

IN THE GENERAL MOOD OF PRE-INDEPENDENCE EUPHORIA SEEMS LIKELY GPNG WILL MAKE ONE MORE EFFORT TO REACH COMPROMISE, BUT SOMARE'S PATIENCE MUST BE SORELY TRIED.
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